



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture  
Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura

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The Director-General

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Dear Congressman Waxman,

Thank you for your letter of 9 July 2001 concerning the Old City of Jerusalem, with particular reference to the work conducted by the Islamic Waqf in the area of the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

You will be interested to know that His Excellency Ambassador Gabay, Permanent Delegate of Israel to UNESCO already wrote to the Assistant Director-General for Culture in this connection, in March 2001. In a second letter, dated 6 April 2001, he informed the Organization that the Commission for Education and Cultural Affairs of the Knesset had requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel to invite UNESCO to send an expert to inspect the aforementioned area as soon as possible.

Concerning the Old City of Jerusalem, which is inscribed on the World Heritage List and the World Heritage List in Danger, I am requested by the governing bodies of UNESCO to send a mission to Jerusalem in order to prepare a report on the Old City with respect to the protection of the environment and the cultural heritage. I have proposed Professor Oleg Grabar from Princeton University to undertake such a mission. Since May 2000 I have repeatedly requested the Israeli authorities to authorize this mission, but unfortunately without success. The reason given to me was that this mission was deemed inappropriate in view of the situation.

Recently, I again requested the Israeli authorities to authorize this mission. I can assure you that UNESCO will do all it can to ensure the preservation of the site of Jerusalem as soon as it has at its disposal a scientific and technical assessment of the situation prepared by a world authority in this field.

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman  
Member of Congress  
United States House of Representatives  
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With regard to the International Millennium Congress on "2000 Years in the History of Architecture", I would stress that the decision to organize this event jointly by UNESCO and ICOMOS and in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority was fully endorsed in September 1999 by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition, the international scientific committee established by ICOMOS for this event includes scholars from Israel and Palestine.

Please rest assured that UNESCO will continue to do all it can to promote peace and mutual understanding in the area within its fields of competence.

Yours sincerely,



Koïchiro Matsuura